

Tepelene Video

Tepelene. One of the harshest camps that existed during the Enver Hoxha regime which ruled this country from 1944-1991. The internment camp saw more deaths of children than any other camp. In this camp were interned my two aunts: Marta and Bardha, my grandmother Mrika, my great grandmother Dava, my uncle Nikoll and my three young cousins Kristina, Celestina and Gjon along with their mother Marta. I will not go into the horrors, as that is for another post, but let me just quote some truths which can be read in full in the CIA report dated 1953 hereby attached: [CIA-RDP80-00810A001300330001-0-Tepelene 1953](https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/stories/1953/08/01/00810a001300330001-0-Tepelene-1953.pdf)

"..sanitary situation in the camp is very bad...prisoners are sick, many with tuberculosis..."

"...malaria, which is chronic with many prisoners, and dysentery...in epidemic proportions. During the epidemic of dysentery in 1950 about 100 people died in the course of three months."

And the list goes on and on. My point is that Enver Hoxha was a dictator of unmatched proportions in the Western world, second only to one might say, Adolf Hitler, only Hoxha lasted 50 years!!! After his death in 1985 and the subsequent fall of communism in 1991 Albania started on the road to Democracy, or so they would like to think, but the facts are evident that the road is a slow and slippery one.

How does this introduction relate to my objective? The government is taking one step forward and two backward. On one hand they are showing the world how connected they are trying to be to the memories of all those killed, tortured, imprisoned etc. by having a memorial at one of the most inhumane camps in the history of Albania and on the other hand they are still revering the murderous dictator.

Which brings me to my point of the day! I went to the Marubi National Museum of Photography in Shkodra today, to inquire about my request for a cd containing photographs of my family, which I submitted in June. Upon entering the lobby what struck me right away was the wall adjacent to the reception desk. The wall, which is at least 8 feet tall, displayed a floor to ceiling photograph of Enver Hoxha on the balcony of City Hall in Shkodra. The photo was taken in 1936 during a memorial ceremony.



As I walked past the reception desk and looked to my right, I was directly facing another 8 foot wall with yet another larger than life photo of the murderous Albanian dictator.



You must understand that these are not just photos affixed to the walls; they are the walls! They are superimposed onto the walls, therefore one would either have to paint over them or resurface the wall. Either way it was not an afterthought. On the contrary, it was a very well thought out plan.

In case there is any confusion here...Shkodra was the epicenter of the resistance to communism for the north during the years preceding Hoxha's victory. Many, many resistance fighters operated from Shkodra, some who were ultimately killed, like my uncle Mark Gjon Marku, had their bodies dragged through the streets of Shkodra and put on display in front of... City Hall... to show everyone what happens to nationalists fighting the regime.

So you might say that yes, I am a little perturbed as to the decision to display this Monster on the walls of a photography museum in the City of Shkodra. A museum which is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture and therefore a government sponsored entity. Did the mayor of Shkodra approve this display or was she kept in the dark about it? Who in the Ministry of Culture is responsible for such an egregious display? Who exactly is on this 'board' that decides which photos are to be displayed?

I understand that 'the Monster' is part of the history of Albania, but they should be more sensitive to the citizens of Shkodra and Albania when deciding to display him on two main walls in the reception area of the museum. A display which is unconscionable; the image of a murderous Monster facing photographs of most certainly his victims on the opposite walls. A display such as this is unconscionable because there is no context for visitors to judge the true nature of the monstrosities this man committed!

The decree issued in 1995 [Dekreti-Nr-1018-date-13-02-1995-1-2-3-Decree-for-removal-of-honors](#) by then President of the Republic clearly states:

"All decorations and titles of honor are to be removed, for the criminal acts of genocide exercised against the Albanian people during the years of communist dictatorship, by persons of the former hierarchy: Enver Hoxha, Nexhmije Hoxha (his wife, who by the way is still alive, collecting a government pension and has a voice in current politics), Shefqet Peci, Hysni Kapo, Gogo Nushi, Spiro Koleka, Haki Toska and Haxhi Lleshi."

Surely those who sat on the board could not have intended for these photographs to be presented in such an arrogant manner as to say "look at me, I'm still here". This is a museum dedicated to the brilliancy of a master photographer not a master propagandist and murderer. Why aren't visitors greeted by a wall to wall photo of Marubi himself? Surely that would be more in keeping with the stated intent of the museum. The current display is a clear slap in the face to the citizens of Shkodra and to all who suffered and survived the despicable regime of this monster.

When I last visited the museum on June 30 I was specifically told, when I inquired as to the absence of any photographs of my family that: *"this is not a museum of the history of Albania but rather a collection of photography showcasing the importance of the Marubi family as photographers"*. If that mission statement is true then why these photos? Clearly without context they violate the law and since the museum is not a 'historical' museum are these the photos the Marubi family and government want the international community to remember them by? Do these photos represent his best work that they required not one...but two oversized walls glaring at them upon entering the museum?

I therefore respectfully request that the responsible individuals who coordinated this display and authorized it, question their judgment and revisit their decision as soon as possible. What does it say when the two largest photos in a museum are those of the man who slaughtered and starved thousands of: men, women and children? What does it say when that monumental photo is facing many of those he victimized?

The people of Albania and most assuredly the citizens of Shkodra, do not want to be remembered by tourists and dignitaries who come to visit their city and their museum as people who by any means endorse the criminal and monster that was Enver Hoxha but rather

want to be remembered as citizens embracing their history in a truthful and honest way, the way any western civilization should be remembered.

Replace this monstrosity with Albanian heroes such as Prek Cali or Isa Bulletin, or dare I say it...a member of a family who has a history going back over 500 years, a history of honor and patriotism, a family who for centuries fought and/or died for the love of their country: Bib Doda, Preng Bib Doda, [Gjon Markagjoni](#), [Mark Gjon Marku](#), [Ndue Gjon Marku](#), [Sander Gjon Marku](#).

If you don't want to make this museum appear as though it's an 'historical' museum then I would suggest closing it all together because all the images showcased are in one way or another connected to the history of Albania, there is no getting away from it. You can't have photographs of the likes of Ernest Koliqi, Luigi Guarkuqi, Gjergj Fishta et al and say it's NOT a museum of history.

All these notables are the people who should be welcoming your visitors. The real heroes of Albania!